

Wellness Notes

Esophagitis*

Part I

What is esophagitis?

Esophagitis is an inflammation of the lining of the esophagus, the tube that connects the throat to the stomach. If left untreated, this condition can become very uncomfortable, causing difficulty in swallowing and ulcers or scarring of the esophagus. In rare instances, a condition known as Barrett's esophagus may develop, which is a risk factor for cancer of the esophagus.

What causes esophagitis?

Esophagitis is caused by an infection or irritation in the esophagus. An infection can be caused by bacteria, viruses, fungi or diseases that weaken the immune system. Irritation can be caused by any of the following:

- A backflow of acid fluid from the stomach to the esophagus (GERD)
- Vomiting
- Surgery
- Medications such as aspirin and anti-inflammatories
- Hital hernias

What are the symptoms of esophagitis?

Symptoms of esophagitis include:

- Difficult and/or painful swallowing
- Heartburn
- Acid regurgitation

If you have any of these symptoms, you should contact your health care provider as soon as possible.

* This information is provided by the Cleveland Clinic and is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or health care provider. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. For additional written health information, please contact the Health Information Center at the Cleveland Clinic (216) 444-3771 or toll-free (800) 223-2273 extension 43771 or visit www.clevelandclinic.org/health/. This document was last reviewed on: 2/15/2006 10/06